LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[*The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of* NATURE. *No notice is taken of anonymous communications.*]

German Naturalists and Nomenclature.

I TRUST that the great majority of naturalists will read with approval the following sentence in Sir George Hampson's paper on "Pyralidæ," published in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society, 1918 (p. 55):—"No quotations from German authors published since August, 1914, are included. 'Hostes humani generis.'"

I have heard it argued that as we owe much to the industrious researches of German naturalists in the past, it would be discourteous to show any prejudice against accepting their assistance in the future towards that extension of knowledge which we all desire.

It may be remembered by those who were present at the meeting of the International Zoological Congress at Monaco in March, 1913, how persistently the representatives of German scientific societies endeavoured on that occasion to dominate the discussions, especially on the subject of the rules of nomenclature, and insisted that the names habitually employed in Germany should receive the sanction of long usage, to the exclusion of all attempts to trace out the literary history of each species and to preserve for it the name bestowed by the first author who described or figured it. The attempt was one which, had it been successful, would have obliged the naturalists of other countries to accept German nomenclature and place themselves thus far unreservedly under German regulations and restrictions. In the Catalogue of Lepidoptera, published in 1871 by Staudinger and Wocke, precedence is improperly but deliberately assigned to German names in preference to earlier ones given by French authors.

Now, as to the question of discourtesy, what will be the position at some future Zoological Congress? Are American, English, French, or Italian naturalists to be expected to meet Germans and to join them in friendly discussion on the various questions that may arise? Considering that before the war every man, woman, and child in Germany, with scarcely an exception, was intent upon war, as has been amply demonstrated by the evidence of innumerable witnesses, it is impossible to dissociate the mental attitude of the population of that country, by no means excepting the highly educated and scientific classes, from the world-conquering aspirations of their rulers, or from the barbarous atrocities committed by them in pursuit of that national ideal. A conspicuous instance is that of a certain learned professor with whom I was on terms of friendship, who was honoured by the Universities of Liverpool and Dublin, and delivered lectures in London under the auspices of the London University, turning out eventually to be a German spy engaged in fomenting rebellion in Ireland and antagonism to England and her Allies in the United States. If an individual in any community commits murder or robbery, or is even plausibly suspected of swindling or cheating at cards, the unavoidable and universally recognised penalty is that no man with a grain of self-respect will ever again associate with him, shake his hand, or converse with him in friendship.

Let us trust that for the next twenty years at least all Germans will be relegated to the category of persons with whom honest men will decline to have any dealings.

It should be fully understood that this is no measure of vengeance. We do not honour thieves by vows of vengeance; we desire to punish them. Any German who may be permitted to attend an international zoological congress in the near future should be made to feel extremely uncomfortable by the urgent necessity of at least partial *camouflage*.

If Sir George Hampson's suggestion by example should be adopted and followed, it could add but a small measure to the punishment which must inevitably form part of any conditions that will be attached to a public peace when granted by dictation, not by negotiation, to the offending nation.

None but a German would use the German language by preference for scientific descriptions of species or genera; thus any inconvenience that might arise from a general refusal on the part of others to accept descriptions worded in German could fall only upon those who have inflicted far more than mere inconvenience upon the world beyond them.

To those Germans, if any there be, who are honestly well disposed, and who put the interests of science before the greed for world-domination, it can be no hardship to publish their descriptions in the English or French language, with which the great majority of their scientific workers are more or less intimately acquainted.

Inestimable damage has been done during the war to historical monuments and priceless works of art. The Germans in Italy were found to have instituted a complete organisation on the Austrian front for securing valuable pillage in the course of the expected advance on Venice; fourgons, under the charge of specially appointed officers with adequate staff, were in readiness to convey to Germany the pick of the art treasures which they believed they would find at their mercy. Collections in various branches of natural history have suffered damage or destruction among other objects. In Russia the paid agents of Germany have brought about, or at least connived at, the wanton destruction of treasures innumerable; some of the finest entomological collections in the world were in Russia, in Belgium, and in Rumania. I would urge that it is the plain duty of the Allies to insist not only that all objects removed shall be replaced, but also that equivalent value in kind shall be rendered for everything destroyed or damaged, and this should apply to specimens illustrating the study of natural history (best represented in value by original author's types), as well as to pictures, statues, and other objects of art or antiquity, for the selection of which from German museums special commissioners should be appointed. WALSINGHAM.

6 Montagu Place, Portman Square, W.1,
August 29.

The Value of Insectivorous Birds.

THE reflections in a letter to NATURE (August 15) on shortcomings in the administration of the Wild Birds' Protection Acts, in so far as they relate to the eggs of the lapwing, which, it is stated, appear on the prohibited lists of only eight Scottish authorities, are now happily at variance with the facts. Far from such being the state of the case, at the present time and for more than ten years past no fewer than twenty-eight—out of thirty-four—Scottish county councils have protected the eggs of this bird, after certain dates which permit of only the first layings being taken for food purposes.

As regards the skylark, the taking of eggs is altogether prohibited, not by twenty-three authorities in

© 1918 Nature Publishing Group

England and Scotland, as stated, but by twenty-eight county councils in Scotland alone, and this also has been the case for more than ten years.

WM. EAGLE CLARKE.

The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.
August 26.

A Mistaken Butterfly.

THE following observation will be of interest in connection with those related in NATURE, vol. xcv., 1915.

At Pennant Hills, near Sydney, on March 24 last, I noticed an interesting case of colour-attraction for a butterfly. A lady was standing talking to two other persons on the footpath opposite my house. She was wearing a plain brown straw hat, fixed with a hat-pin having a light blue porcelain knob about half an inch in diameter. A butterfly (*Papilio sarpedon*) kept flying about the knob as if fascinated, and followed the lady closely when she went up the footpath to the house, flying away only when the lady entered the house.

I watched it for quite five minutes, during which time the butterfly never went more than a few inches from the lady's head, and always returned to the blue knob, apparently trying to alight thereon. The lady several times brushed at the insect with her hand to drive it away.

THOS. STEEL.

Sydney, New South Wales.

FERTILISERS AFTER THE WAR.

IN view of the great increase in the facilities for making sulphuric acid, attempts have naturally been made to find an outlet for the new production after the war, and a Departmental Committee appointed to go into the subject has recently examined the possibility of an additional production of fertilisers, which before the war absorbed some 60 per cent. of the acid made. The report of the Committee (Cd. 8994, 1918) has already been discussed in these columns from the point of view of sulphuric acid production: it remains now to consider the effect on fertilisers. The report is very short and does not include the statistical data necessary for a full discussion of the problem: fortunately these can be collected from other sources.

Prior to the war the total consumption of artificial fertilisers in this country was something above 1,000,000 tons per annum, made up approximately as follows:—

		Estimated pre-war consumption in United Kingdom. Tons per annum	Estimated annual value. Pre-war prices £
Farmyard manure		37,000,000 ...	11,000,000
Nitrate of soda		80,000 ...	920,000
Sulphate of ammonia		60,000 ...	750,000
Cyanamide (nitrolim) and nitrate of lime		10,000 ...	110,000
Superphosphate		600,000 ...	1,650,000
Basic slag		280,000 ...	560,000
Guano	Say[1]	25,000 ...	250,000
Bones	,,	40,000 ...	200,000
Others	,,	10,000 ...	100,000
Total ... ...' ...		1,105,000 ...	4,540,000

[1] No good estimate can be made of the amount of guano, bones, and other materials used as fertilisers.

At the same time the areas under the various crops in the United Kingdom were as follows:—

	Million acres in the United Kingdom
Wheat, barley, oats	7·67
Potatoes	1·21
Swedes, turnips, mangolds	2·28
Other arable crops	1·55
Temporary grass	6·61
Permanent grass...	27·35
Total	46·67

This distribution of land and consumption of fertilisers gave the following amounts of food:—

	Quantity obtained: millions of tons			How utilised: millions of tons	
	Home-grown	Imported	Total	Eaten by human beings	Eaten by animals
Cereals	6·5	10·4	16·9	5·2	9·2
Potatoes	4·8	0·7	5·5	5·5	—
Other roots (estimated) ...	44·5	—	44·5	—	44·5
Grass (estimated as hay) ...	60	—	60	—	60
Other foods:—					
Sugar, fish, etc.	—	—	3·4	3·4	—
Cake, straw, etc.	—	—	6·3	—	6·3
Animal food:—					
Dairy produce (mainly milk)	4·7	0·5	5·2	5·2	—
Meat	1·8	1·2	3·0	3·0	—
Total ...	122·3	12·8	144·8	22·3	120

The experience of the war has shown that this type of production is not really the most satisfactory to the nation as a whole, as it leaves us far too dependent on foreign countries for supplies of wheat. On the other hand, a system of husbandry that produces much wheat is unsatisfactory to the farmer because of the possibility that heavy crops in the Argentine or North America or elsewhere might pull down prices to unremunerative levels. The risk may, in fact, never materialise, but it has been burned into the farmers' minds by the low prices of the nineties of the last century. In consequence, before the war wheat-growing was diminishing in this country, and grass was increasing.

Under the double stimulus of high prices and Government action farmers have during the war broken up more than 3,000,000 acres of grass land and thus added considerably to the area under cereals, particularly wheat and oats. The breaking up of the grass land has led to the production of much more food in the country and necessitated the use of more fertilisers. It is officially stated that we now produce breadstuffs sufficient for forty weeks per annum, whereas before the war we produced only enough for ten weeks. This does not, of course, mean that we produce four times as much food as formerly; the breadstuffs are not quite the same as they were; but it does show that we go a long way towards feeding ourselves.

The scientific problems involved are more

© 1918 Nature Publishing Group